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HALF TURKEYS A GOOD BUY THIS YEAR

Serving half a large turkey instead of a small whole one on small-family tables may benefit consumer and producer alike this holiday season, when the supply of turkeys for civilian consumption is expected to reach the all-time high of about $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds per capita. About half the meat cooked from these turkeys will come from large birds. It costs less per pound to raise turkey hens weighing 12 pounds and over and toms weighing 20 pounds and over than to raise birds of lighter weight. Producer preference, therefore, runs to large size turkeys, especially in areas having wide stretches of good natural range land. The average live weight of turkeys coming onto the American markets has increased steadily, rising from 15.1 pounds for the 5-year period 1937 to 1941 to 17.4 pounds in 1945. Present indications are that it will be even higher this year.

As in the past, institutions and hotels and other restaurants will be the producer's best market for big turkeys. But there still will be an abundant supply of large turkeys in the market. The sale of half turkeys can help prevent burdensome supplies, according to poultry marketing specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. Half a large well-fleshed turkey also may be a better bargain than a whole small one for buyers looking for a turkey weighing around 10 pounds. The large bird, either whole or halved, gives 15 to 20 percent more cooked meat than the small one of the same sex. Added to that, the price per pound should be less for the large bird, which costs less per pound to raise.

Producers this season have been receiving 8 to 19 cents a pound less for turkey toms weighing over 18 pounds than for smaller birds. Recent quotations in retail stores indicate that these lower prices are being passed on to consumers.

Neither size nor sex alone is important in selecting a turkey, Department poultry specialists say. Toms are larger, but they are no more, and no less, tender and juicy than the hens.

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